

HONGO *et al.* -- 09/815,305

Attorney Docket No. 040258-0279274

- Amendment -

REMARKS

Reconsideration and the timely allowance of the pending claims, in view of the following remarks, are respectfully requested.

The Examiner rejected claims 26, 28-29, 37, 39-40, and 44-45, under 35 USC §103(a), as allegedly being unpatentable over Li '771 (US Patent No. 5,772,771); claims 27 and 38 were rejected, under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), as allegedly being unpatentable over Li '771 in view of Tomoyasu '103 (US Pat. No. 5,900,103); and claims 26-29, 31-32, 37-40, and 42-45 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Tei '215 (US Patent Pub. No. 2002/0011215) in view of Tomoyasu '103 and Li '771.

By this Amendment, claims 26, 37, and 44 have been amended to provide a clearer presentation of the claimed subject matter. Applicants submit that no new matter has been introduced. As such, claims 26-29, 31-33, 37-40, 42-43, and 44-45 are currently presented for examination of which claims 26, 37, and 44 are independent.

Applicants respectfully traverse the prior art rejections, under 35 U.S.C. §103(a), for the reasons presented below.

I. Prior Art Rejections of Claims 26, 37, & 44

As indicated above, independent claim 26 now positively recites that the gas introducing ring includes an inlet port opening to the annular passage and connected to the gas supply line so as to supply the gas to the annular passage and an outlet port opening to the annular passage and connected to the gas exhaust line, the outlet port opening at a position different from a position at which the inlet port opens.

Such features are amply supported by the embodiments disclosed in the Specification. (See, e.g., Specification: page 21, line 24 – page 22, line 31: FIGs. 1, 6A, 6B). For example in one of the embodiments disclosed by the Specification, a configuration is provided in which a gas introducing (supply) ring 140 includes an

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annular passage 142, an inlet port 141, and an outlet port 144. The inlet port 141, which is connected to a gas supply line 136, opens into annular passage 142, while the outlet port 144, which is connected to the gas exhaust line 138, opens from annular passage 142 at a different point than the inlet port 141. With this configuration, in which the outlet port is connected to the annular passage, gases inside the annular passage can be evacuated faster than any of the configurations identified by the prior art references.

In contrast to the Examiner's assertions, there is nothing in any of the applied references that teach or suggest the combination of features recited in claim 26. In particular, the Li '771 reference discloses that a processing gas is provided to manifold 36 at opposite sides of the manifold to disperse gas through a plurality of nozzles 34. The processing gas is supplied to manifold 36 via by a pair of gas feed lines 70, 72, which are coupled to a common gas feed line 80. (See, Li '771: col. 4, lines 16-24; FIG. 4). Li '771 further discloses that, during cleaning operations, the common gas feed line 80 is coupled to a cleaning gas line 82 via a shutoff valve 88 and ultimately to a vacuum pump 84 to exhaust the gases via line 82. (See, Li et al.: col. 4, lines 38-54; FIG. 5).

In so doing, Li '771 fails to teach or suggest that the outlet port, which is connected to the gas exhaust line, opens directly into the annular passage at a position different from a position at which the inlet port opens, as required by claim 26. That is, if cleaning gas line 82 is construed as being equivalent to the claimed gas exhaust line, as asserted by the Examiner, cleaning gas line 82 *never connects* or otherwise *directly opens up to* manifold 36, as required by the claim language. Rather, the architecture disclosed clearly shows that the cleaning gas line 82 is connected to common gas feed line 80. (See, FIG. 5).

Applicants submit that none of the other references applied to claim 26 are capable of curing the defects of the Li '771 reference noted above. Indeed, none of the other references, including Tei '215 and Tomoyasu '103, teach a configuration in which the outlet port opens up to the annular passage, as required by the claim.

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For at least these reasons, Applicants submit that claim 26 is clearly patentable over the references of record. Accordingly, the immediate withdrawal of all prior art rejections of claim 26 is respectfully requested. Moreover, because claims 27-29 depend from claim 26, claims 27-29 are also patentable by virtue of dependency as well as for their additional recitations.

Also, because independent claims 37 and 44 positively recite features that are similar to the patentable features of claim 26, claims 37 and 44 are patentable for at least the reasons identified relative to claim 26. And, because claims 38-40, 42-43 and claim 45 depend from claims 37 and claim 44, respectively, claims 38-40, 42-43, 45 are also patentable by virtue of dependency as well as for its additional recitations.

II. Conclusion.

All matters having been addressed and in view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully request the entry of this Amendment, the Examiner's reconsideration of this application, and the immediate allowance of all pending claims.

Applicants' Counsel remains ready to assist the Examiner in any way to facilitate and expedite the prosecution of this matter. Please charge any fees associated with the submission of this paper to Deposit Account Number 033975, Order No. 040258-0279274.

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The Commissioner for Patents is also authorized to credit any over payments to the above-referenced Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,

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